

SIKHISM: A UNIQUE RELIGION

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INTRODUCTION: Ever since Guru Nanak Dev Ji founded Sikhism, it has suffered opposition because it was a direct threat to the way the religious leaders were befooling the public and robbing them by creating baseless superstitions and divisions among them based on the human-made caste system. *But, because of the very powerful Divine Message of universal equality of all human beings, and the worship of only one Supreme Being, the religion flourished not only in the home state of Guru Nanak, Punjab, but all over India, and to some degree even in the neighboring countries of Nepal, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, and beyond.* Many Hindus, and quite a few Muslims too, became Guru Nanak's followers. When the religious leaders of both Hinduism and Islam, felt threatened by Guru Nanak's Teachings, their opposition grew more intense, but remained ineffective for most part until after the physical death of *Guru Gobind Singh Ji.*

Even though Sikhism has flourished, and the Sikhs are known all over the world today for their bravery, for their help to all mankind in disasters, their hospitality, and their open-mindedness. But we have not been able to teach the world about the greatness of our religion, and most Western scholars define Sikhism as an offshoot off Hinduism, or at best, a good combination of Hinduism and Islam. Some people believe that Sikhism is just a product of the Bhagati Movement.

But, now the RSS in India is preaching vehemently that Sikhism came into being to defend Hinduism, and is just a part of it. The sad thing is that many ignorant Sikhs agree with it. But no matter what people say or preach, Sikhism is neither an offshoot of any religion or movement, and nor a combination of any faiths. Of course, there are always some similarities between various religions including atheism, but that by no

means implies, that Sikhism is not a unique religion – which it is. I will discuss the striking differences between Sikhism as a unique religion, and the other religions, one by one. **I want to clarify here that the idea of this article is NOT to show any religion to be inferior to Sikhism, but simply to show the differences why Sikhism is Unique.**

HINDUISM: Hindus have countless gods and goddesses, but believe in no single Supreme Being. They have a trio of gods – Brahma as the creator of the universe, Vishnu as the provider, and Shiva as the destroyer of the universe. The other popular gods are, Rama, Krishna, and Indra (which is the king of all gods, and rules the paradise). Most of their gods, including Ganesh, are born in highly unnatural ways. Even Brahma, which is believed to be the creator of the universe, was born out of the lotus flower growing out of the navel of Vishnu. Their most holy books are the four Vedas, 18 Puranas, 6 Shastras, and the Geeta. They worship idols, and perform countless rituals including, wearing a cotton thread around their necks, pilgrimage of 68 holy places, self-torturing, and donations to Brahmans. Many rivers are sacred to them.

Their beliefs include hell and paradise as separate physical places where the humans go after death based on the deeds they perform; maintaining cleanliness and not allowing the lower caste people to touch them; worshipping cows as sacred animals. Now, let us see what Sri Guru Granth Sahib has to say about their gods, holy books, and their religious practices.

Before I continue, let me add that despite many weaknesses and flaws in the religion, Guru Nanak Sahib did not want to introduce revolutionary changes very quickly, so He continued to use the common names used by the people for their deities, to address, and to refer to the Supreme Being. In addition to Kartar, and Akal Purakh, the other common names used for God in Sri Guru Granth Sahib (SGGS) include Ram, Bishan (Vishnu), Prubhu, Hari, Gobind, Gopal, Banvaari, Vasudev, Mooraari, and even Allah and Rahim. His own choice for Waheguru was Kartar, Akal Purakh, Nirunjun, Sat(u) or Sach(u), and Ekonkar (Ikk Onkar or Ekunkar). He also continued to use the stories

from the Puranas as parables to promote the grandeur of Waheguru (now the most common used name for the Supreme Being).

Holy Books – the Vedas: The four Vedas are the major holy books of the Hindus. As discussed earlier there may be some overlaps between the Vedas and Sri Guru Granth Sahib (SGGS), the holy scriptures of the Sikhs, but there are striking differences as well. The Vedas do not espouse worship of “One” Supreme Being but of many gods and goddesses which function independently. The major emphasis of the Vedas is on the gods Indra, air, fire, the moon, and the sun, and on many stories, which seem very unnatural. They also emphasize the importance of good and bad deeds (for which many rituals are advised) as a result of which one goes to hell or heaven (paradise) after death. There are many holy Shabads in SGGS which deemphasize the importance of the Vedas as a means to connect with God; but only a few will be quoted here:

- ਮਾਂਦਲੁ ਬੇਦਿ ਸਿ ਬਾਜਣੇ ਘਣੇ ਧੜੀਐ ਜੇਇ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਨਾਮੁ ਸਮਾਲਿ ਤੂ ਬੀਜਉ ਅਵਰੁ ਨ ਕੋਇ ॥੨॥
- *The drum of the Vedas vibrates, bringing dispute and divisiveness. O Nanak, contemplate the Naam, the Name of the Lord; there is none except Him. ||2||*
(SGGS, M.1, P. 1091)
- ਕਥਾ ਕਹਾਣੀ ਬੇਦੀ ਆਣੀ ਪਾਪੁ ਪੁੰਨੁ ਬੀਚਾਰੁ ॥ ਦੇ ਦੇ ਲੈਣਾ ਲੈ ਲੈ ਦੇਣਾ ਨਰਕਿ ਸੁਰਗਿ ਅਵਤਾਰ ॥
ਉਤਮ ਮਧਿਮ ਜਾਤੀ ਜਿਨਸੀ ਭਰਮਿ ਭਵੈ ਸੰਸਾਰੁ ॥ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਬਾਣੀ ਤਤੁ ਵਖਾਣੀ ਗਿਆਨ ਧਿਆਨ
ਵਿਚਿ ਆਈ ॥ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਆਖੀ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਜਾਤੀ ਸੁਰਤੀ ਕਰਮਿ ਧਿਆਈ ॥
- *The Vedas bring forth stories and legends, and thoughts of vice and virtue. What is given, they receive, and what is received, they give. They are reincarnated in heaven and hell. High and low, social class and status - the world wanders lost in superstition. The Ambrosial Word of Gurbani proclaims the essence of reality. Spiritual wisdom and meditation are contained within it. The Gurmukhs chant it, and the Gurmukhs realize it.*
(SGGS, M.2, P. 1243)
- ਬੇਦੁ ਪੁਕਾਰੇ ਪੁੰਨੁ ਪਾਪੁ ਸੁਰਗੁ ਨਰਕੁ ਕਾ ਬੀਉ ॥ ਜੋ ਬੀਜੈ ਸੋ ਉਗਵੈ ਖਾਦਾ ਜਾਣੈ ਜੀਉ ॥
ਗਿਆਨੁ ਸਲਾਹੇ ਵਡਾ ਕਰਿ ਸਚੇ ਸਚਾ ਨਾਉ ॥ ਸਚੁ ਬੀਜੈ ਸਚੁ ਉਗਵੈ ਦਰਗਹ ਪਾਈਐ ਥਾਉ ॥
ਬੇਦੁ ਵਪਾਰੀ ਗਿਆਨੁ ਰਾਸਿ ਕਰਮੀ ਪਲੈ ਹੋਇ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਰਾਸੀ ਬਾਹਰਾ ਲਇ ਨ ਚਲਿਆ ਕੋਇ ॥੨॥
- *The Vedas proclaim that vice and virtue are the seeds of heaven and hell. Whatever is planted, shall grow. The soul eats the fruits of its actions, and*

understands. Whoever praises spiritual wisdom as great, becomes truthful in the True Name. When Truth is planted, Truth grows. In the Court of the Lord, you shall find your place of honour. The Vedas are only merchants; spiritual wisdom is the capital; by His Grace, it is received. O Nanak, without capital, no one has ever departed with profit. || 2 |

(SGGS, M.1, P. 1243-44)

- ਡਗਰੀ ਚਾਲ ਨੇਤ੍ਰ ਫੁਨਿ ਅੰਧੁਲੇ ਸਬਦ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਨਹੀ ਭਾਈ ॥
ਸਾਸਤ੍ਰ ਬੇਦ ਤ੍ਰੈ ਗੁਣ ਹੈ ਮਾਇਆ ਅੰਧਲਓ ਧੰਧੁ ਕਮਾਈ ॥੩॥

Your steps are unsteady, and your eyes are blind; you are not aware of the Word of the Shabad, O Sibling of Destiny. The Shaastras and the Vedas keep the mortal bound to the three modes of Maya, and so he performs his deeds blindly. || 3 ||

(SGGS, M.1, P.1127)

- ਬੇਦ ਬਾਦ ਸਭਿ ਆਖਿ ਵਖਾਣਹਿ ॥ ਨ ਅੰਤਰੁ ਭੀਜੈ ਨ ਸਬਦੁ ਪਛਾਣਹਿ ॥
ਪੁੰਨੁ ਪਾਪੁ ਸਭੁ ਬੇਦਿ ਦ੍ਰਿੜਾਇਆ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਪੀਜੈ ਹੇ ॥੧੫॥

He voices all the controversies of the Vedas, but his inner being is not saturated or satisfied, and he does not realize the Word of the Shabad. The Vedas tell all about virtue and vice, but only the Gurmukh drinks in the Ambrosial Nectar. || 15 ||

(SGGS, M.3, P. 1050)

- ਗੁਰ ਕੀ ਮਹਿਮਾ ਬੇਦ ਨ ਜਾਣਹਿ ॥ ਤੁਛ ਮਾਤ ਸੁਣਿ ਸੁਣਿ ਵਖਾਣਹਿ ॥
ਪਾਰਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਅਪਰੰਪਰ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਜਿਸੁ ਸਿਮਰਤ ਮਨੁ ਸੀਤਲਾਇਣਾ ॥੧੦॥

Even the Vedas do not know the Guru's Glory. They narrate only a tiny bit of what is heard. The True Guru is the Supreme Lord God, the Incomparable One; meditating in remembrance on Him, the mind is cooled and soothed.

(SGGS, M.5, P. 1078)

As you can see SGGS does not recognize Vedas or other Hindu holy books as the media following the teachings of which, a man can get connected with God. The Vedas talk only about the sinful and the noble deeds, which lead a person to hell or paradise. There is no mention of the means by which the man can connect with God.

Hindu Gods: Sri Guru Granth Sahib does not treat the natural creations like, air, water, fire, the sun, the moon, and the like, to be gods. Even the most popular gods like, Shiva, Vishnu, Brahma, and Indra are treated like ordinary human beings, and no better than them. None of them is the creator of the universe, the provider for, or the

destroyer as projected in the Hindu texts. According to SGGS, God (Waheguru) is all-in-all in the whole universe, and He does not need even the assistance of any god or angel to run the universe. In fact, all the gods were as much victims of Maya (bonded to it) as a common man. Like a common man, they have to have noble qualities, and obey Waheguru's Command to be approved by Him. The following few Shabads support this conclusion.

- ਮਾਇਆ ਮੁਈ ਨ ਮਨੁ ਮੁਆ ਸਰੁ ਲਹਰੀ ਮੈ ਮਤੁ ॥
ਬੋਹਿਥੁ ਜਲ ਸਿਰਿ ਤਰਿ ਟਿਕੈ ਸਾਚਾ ਵਖਰੁ ਜਿਤੁ ॥.....
ਬ੍ਰਹਮਾ ਬਿਸਨੁ ਰਿਖੀ ਮੁਨੀ ਸੰਕਰੁ ਇੰਦੁ ਤਪੈ ਭੇਖਾਰੀ ॥
ਮਾਨੈ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਸੋਹੈ ਦਰਿ ਸਾਚੈ ਆਕੀ ਮਰਹਿ ਅਫਾਰੀ ॥

Maya is not conquered, and the mind is not subdued; the waves of desire in the world-ocean are intoxicating wine. The boat crosses over the water, carrying the true merchandise.

Brahma and Vishnu, the Rishis and the silent sages, Shiva and Indra, penitents and beggars - whoever obeys the Hukam of the Lord's Command, looks beautiful in the Court of the True Lord, while the stubborn rebels die.

(SGGS, M.1, P.992)

- ਬ੍ਰਹਮਾ ਬਿਸਨੁ ਮਹੇਸੁ ਦੁਆਰੈ ॥ ਉਭੈ ਸੇਵਹਿ ਅਲਖ ਅਪਾਰੈ ॥
ਹੋਰ ਕੇਤੀ ਦਰਿ ਦੀਸੈ ਬਿਲਲਾਦੀ ਮੈ ਗਣਤ ਨ ਆਵੈ ਕਾਈ ਹੇ ॥੧੪॥

Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva stand at His Door; they serve the unseen, infinite Lord. Millions of others can be seen crying at His door; I cannot even estimate their numbers. || 14 ||

(SGGS, M.1, P. 1022)

- ਰੋਗੀ ਬ੍ਰਹਮਾ ਬਿਸਨੁ ਸਰੁਦਾ ਰੋਗੀ ਸਗਲ ਸੰਸਾਰਾ ॥
ਹਰਿ ਪਦੁ ਚੀਨਿ ਭਏ ਸੇ ਮੁਕਤੇ ਗੁਰ ਕਾ ਸਬਦੁ ਵੀਚਾਰਾ ॥੪॥

Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva are diseased; the whole world is diseased. Those who remember the Lord's Feet and contemplate the Word of the Guru's Shabad are liberated. || 4 ||

(SGGS, M.1, P. 1153)

- ਬ੍ਰਹਮਾ ਬਿਸਨੁ ਮਹਾਦੇਉ ਤ੍ਰੈ ਗੁਣ ਰੋਗੀ ਵਿਚਿ ਹਉਮੈ ਕਾਰ ਕਮਾਈ ॥
ਜਿਨਿ ਕੀਏ ਤਿਸਹਿ ਨ ਚੇਤਹਿ ਬਪੁੜੇ ਹਰਿ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਸੋਝੀ ਪਾਈ ॥੨॥

Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva suffer from the disease of the three gunas - the three qualities; they do their deeds in egotism. The poor fools do not

remember the One who created them; this understanding of the Lord is only obtained by those who become Gurmukh. || 2 ||

(SGGS, M.4, P.735)

- ਮੈਲਾ ਬ੍ਰਹਮਾ ਮੈਲਾ ਇੰਦੁ ॥ ਰਵਿ ਮੈਲਾ ਮੈਲਾ ਹੈ ਚੰਦੁ ॥੧॥ ਮੈਲਾ ਮਲਤਾ ਇਹੁ ਸੰਸਾਰੁ ॥ ਇਕੁ ਹਰਿ ਨਿਰਮਲੁ ਜਾ ਕਾ ਅੰਤੁ ਨ ਪਾਰੁ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥ ਮੈਲੇ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੰਡਾਇ ਕੈ ਈਸ ॥ ਮੈਲੇ ਨਿਸਿ ਬਾਸੁਰ ਦਿਨ ਤੀਸ ॥੨॥ ਮੈਲਾ ਮੋਤੀ ਮੈਲਾ ਹੀਰੁ ॥ ਮੈਲਾ ਪਉਨੁ ਪਾਵਕੁ ਅਰੁ ਨੀਰੁ ॥੩॥ ਮੈਲੇ ਸਿਵ ਸੰਕਰਾ ਮਹੇਸ ॥ ਮੈਲੇ ਸਿਧ ਸਾਧਿਕ ਅਰੁ ਭੇਖ ॥੪॥

Brahma is polluted, and Indra is polluted. The sun is polluted, and the moon is polluted. || 1 || This world is polluted with pollution. Only the One Lord is Immaculate; He has no end or limitation. || 1 || Pause || The rulers of kingdoms are polluted. Nights and days, and the days of the month are polluted. || 2 || The pearl is polluted, the diamond is polluted. Wind, fire and water are polluted. || 3 || Shiva, Shankara and Mahaysh are polluted. The Siddhas, seekers and strivers, and those who wear religious robes, are polluted. || 4 ||

(SGGS, Bhagat Kabir, P. 1158)

These holy Shabads clearly espouse that all the gods and the goddesses (if they did exist) were fully engrossed in Maya (*haumein* and worldly attachments) like the common man. So, they were (are) spiritually no better than the common man.

Hindu Rituals: The third aspect of spirituality among the Hindus is their rituals, which have been promoted mostly by the elite Brahmans for their own superiority and dominance. Most of the rituals are based on meaningless superstitions to help Brahmans to fleece the ignorant masses, and to suppress the women and the lower castes. Among many others, they include, rich donations to Brahmans at all occasions – happy or sad - a strong belief in caste-system, pilgrimage, self-torturing to please some deity, suttee (self-immolation of widows on the pyre of their husbands – mostly forced), donations to Brahmans at eclipses, fasting by women to enhance the life span of husbands, and so on. There are many holy Shabads in SGGS which give no spiritual credit to any, and all of such rituals.

- ਤੀਰਥੁ ਤਪੁ ਦਇਆ ਦਤੁ ਦਾਨੁ ॥ ਜੇ ਕੋ ਪਾਵੈ ਤਿਲ ਕਾ ਮਾਨੁ ॥
ਸੁਣਿਆ ਮੰਨਿਆ ਮਨਿ ਕੀਤਾ ਭਾਉ ॥ ਅੰਤਰਗਤਿ ਤੀਰਥਿ ਮਲਿ ਨਾਉ ॥

Pilgrimages, austere discipline, compassion and charity -these, by themselves, bring only an iota of merit. Listening and believing with love and humility in your mind, cleanse yourself with the Name, at the sacred shrine deep within.

(SGGS, Japuji, Pauri 21)

- ਨ ਭੀਜੈ ਰਾਗੀ ਨਾਦੀ ਬੇਦਿ ॥ ----- ਨ ਭੀਜੈ ਤੀਰਥਿ ਭਵਿਐ ਨੰਗੁ ॥
ਨ ਭੀਜ ਦਾਤੀ ਕੀਤੈ ਪੁੰਨਿ ॥ ਨ ਭੀਜੈ ਬਾਹਰਿ ਬੈਠਿਆ ਸੁੰਨਿ ॥ ----
ਲੇਖਾ ਲਿਖੀਐ ਮਨ ਕੈ ਭਾਇ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਭੀਜੈ ਸਾਚੈ ਨਾਇ ॥

He is not won over by music, songs or the Vedas. He is not won over by intuitive wisdom, meditation or Yoga. He is not won over by feeling sad and depressed forever. He is not won over by beauty, wealth and pleasures. He is not won over by wandering naked at sacred shrines. He is not won over by giving donations in charity. He is not won over by living alone in the wilderness. He is not won over by fighting and dying as a warrior in battle. He is not won over by becoming the dust of the masses. The account is written of the loves of the mind. O Nanak, the Lord is won over only by His Name.

(SGGS, M.1, P. 1237)

- ਕਰਮ ਧਰਮ ਪਾਖੰਡ ਜੋ ਦੀਸਹਿ ਤਿਨ ਜਮੁ ਜਾਗਾਤੀ ਲੂਟੇ ॥ -----
▪ ਬੇਦ ਕਤੇਬ ਸਿਮ੍ਰਿਤਿ ਸਭ ਸਾਸਤ ਇਨ੍ਹੁ ਪੜਿਆ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਨ ਹੋਈ ॥ -----
▪ ਖੜੀ ਬ੍ਰਾਹਮਣ ਸੂਦ ਵੈਸ ਉਪਦੇਸੁ ਚਹੁ ਵਰਨਾ ਕਉ ਸਾਝਾ ॥
▪ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਜਪੈ ਉਧਰੈ ਸੋ ਕਲਿ ਮਹਿ ਘਟਿ ਘਟਿ ਨਾਨਕ ਮਾਝਾ ॥

The religious rites, rituals and hypocrisies which are seen, are plundered by the Messenger of Death, the ultimate tax collector. In the state of Nirvaanaa, sing the Kirtan of the Creator's Praises; contemplating Him in meditation, even for an instant, one is saved. || 1 ||

One may read all the books of the Vedas, the Bible, the Simritees and the Shaastras, but they will not bring liberation. One who, as Gurmukh, chants the One Word, acquires a spotlessly pure reputation. || 3 ||

The four castes - the Kh'shaatriyas, Brahmins, Soodras and Vaishyas - are equal in respect to the teachings. One who, as Gurmukh, chants the Naam, the Name of the Lord, is saved. In this Dark Age of Kali Yuga, O Nanak, God is permeating the hearts of each and every being. || 4 || 3 || 50 ||

(SGGS, M.5, P.747-48)

- ਨਾ ਤੂ ਆਵਹਿ ਵਸਿ ਬਹੁਤੁ ਘਿਣਾਵਣੇ ॥ ਨਾ ਤੂ ਆਵਹਿ ਵਸਿ ਬੇਦ ਪੜਾਵਣੇ ॥
ਨਾ ਤੂ ਆਵਹਿ ਵਸਿ ਤੀਰਥਿ ਨਾਈਐ ॥ ਨਾ ਤੂ ਆਵਹਿ ਵਸਿ ਧਰਤੀ ਧਾਈਐ ॥
ਨਾ ਤੂ ਆਵਹਿ ਵਸਿ ਕਿਤੈ ਸਿਆਣਪੈ ॥ ਨਾ ਤੈ ਆਵਹਿ ਵਸਿ ਬਹੁਤਾ ਦਾਨੁ ਦੇ ॥
ਸਭੁ ਕੋ ਤੇਰੇ ਵਸਿ ਅਗਮ ਅਗੋਚਰਾ ॥ ਤੂ ਭਗਤਾ ਕੈ ਵਸਿ ਭਗਤਾ ਤਾਣੁ ਤੇਰਾ ॥ 10 ॥

No one can bring You under control, by despising the world. No one can bring You under control, by studying the Vedas. No one can bring You under control, by bathing at the holy places. No one can bring You under control, by wandering all over the world. No one can bring You under control, by any clever tricks. No one can bring You under control, by giving huge donations to charities. Everyone is under Your power, O

inaccessible, unfathomable Lord. You are under the control of Your devotees; You are the strength of Your devotees.

(SGGS, M.5, P.962)

So, how can anyone say that Sikhism is an offshoot of Hinduism when it does not believe in its philosophy, its gods and in its rituals??

ISLAM: Islam does believe that there is only one Supreme Being which they call, Allah. Barring some common social beliefs, this is probably the only spiritual belief that Sikhism has common with Islam. Many of their other beliefs which are not shared by Sikhism are as follows:

1. Those, who do not believe in Allah (and in Islam) are all infidels, and will go to hell as Allah does not like them.
2. Unlike Sikhism, Islam believes in hell and paradise as dedicated places.
3. Islam puts limits on the extent of the universe: For example, Islam believes in 7 skies above the earth, and 7 below. Allah resides on the 7th heaven, whereas angels and other holy men reside on the 5th and the 6th heavens.
4. Islam believes in Judgment Day: A day will come when everybody will be judged for their deeds.
5. It believes in Adam as the first human being, and in Satan. During Hajj, the Muslims stone a hill near Mecca, which they believe to be the place of the Satan. They also believe in Angels.
6. Holiness of the month of Ramadan. During the month of Ramadan (the ninth month of the Lunar calendar) all adult Muslims observe fasting from dawn to dusk.
7. Islam believes that Allah is pleased with sacrifice. That is why Muslims offer sacrifice of animals on the tenth and the last day of Hajj. This is called Eid-al-Adha.
8. It is debatable (Wikipedia), but some people interpret some *suras* in the holy Quran that punishing (or even killing of) the infidels (non-Muslims) is justified.

In the light of the above Muslim beliefs, how can one say that Sikhism is a combination of Hinduism and Islam. During His travels, Guru Nanak Sahib had

collected some compositions of the renowned holy saints which were in agreement with His own philosophy, **and which were later enshrined in SGGS. If He had found some identity of views in the Quran, He would have probably included some verses from the Quran in SGGS as India had a huge population of Muslims as well.**

BHAGATI MOVEMENT: Yes, Sikhism has most beliefs which are common with the philosophy of the Bhagats. That is why Guru Nanak Sahib has included the Bhagat-Bani in SGGS. But Sikhism is NOT an extension of the Bhagati movement. There are still some subtle but major differences between Sikhism and the Bhagati movement as follows:

1. Depth of Divine Knowledge and Delivering Divine Message.
2. Passing on the Guruship; Compilation of the Holy Guru Granth Sahib; and Supreme Sacrifices made by Guru Sahiban.
3. Fight against the Caste-System, and establishing Common Kitchen (Langar)
4. Fighting for the Rights of Others

We will discuss each of them separately.

1. Depth of Divine Knowledge and Delivering Divine Message.

All the Bhagats, whose compositions are enshrined in SGGS, believed strongly in one Supreme Being, and they glorified God. But the founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak, had much deeper knowledge about the Supreme Being and of the universe than any of the Bhagats. Guru Nanak has given clear hints about gravity, and the orbits of the earth around the sun (1). He claimed that there are countless ways of reproduction of living beings as opposed to only the four accepted by the Hindu religious books, and countless ways with which the living beings communicate. No Bhagat is known to have mentioned any of these facts in their writings.

Like the nine Gurus, after Guru Nanak, who succeeded their predecessors in turn, had spiritual Gurus (their Predecessors), all the Bhagats had also their gurus to guide them on the path of spirituality before they got connected with God through their hard spiritual labour. But Guru Nanak did not have any worldly spiritual Guru. He was connected with God from the His very birth. Before leaving on His odysseys, He

disappeared for three days in the Vein River at Sultanpur Lodhi. It is believed that He was in constant contact with Waheguru (God) all that time, at which He received instructions from Him (God) about spreading His Message in the world. Guru Nanak Sahib has written about His experience in Majh Kee Vaar as follows:

- ਹਉ ਢਾਢੀ ਵੇਕਾਰੁ ਕਾਰੈ ਲਾਇਆ ॥ ਰਾਤਿ ਦਿਹੈ ਕੈ ਵਾਰ ਧੁਰਹੁ ਫੁਰਮਾਇਆ ॥
ਢਾਢੀ ਸਚੈ ਮਹਲਿ ਖਸਮਿ ਬੁਲਾਇਆ ॥ ਸਚੀ ਸਿਫਤਿ ਸਾਲਾਹ ਕਪੜਾ ਪਾਇਆ ॥
ਸਚਾ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਨਾਮੁ ਭੋਜਨੁ ਆਇਆ ॥ ----
ਢਾਢੀ ਕਰੇ ਪਸਾਉ ਸਬਦੁ ਵਜਾਇਆ ॥ ----- 21 ॥

I was a minstrel, out of work, when the Lord took me into His service. To sing His Praises day and night, He gave me His Order, right from the start. My Lord and Master has summoned me, His minstrel, to the True Mansion of His Presence. He has dressed me in the robes of His True Praise and Glory. The Ambrosial Nectar of the True Name has become my food. Those who follow the Guru's Teachings, who eat this food and are satisfied, find peace. His minstrel spreads His Glory, singing and vibrating the Word of His Shabad. O Nanak, praising the True Lord, I have obtained His Perfection.

(SGGS, M. 1, P. 150)

Other Guru Sahiban and the Bhattas have also emphatically declared that Guru Nanak Sahib was a manifestation of Waheguru. Read the following Shabads:

- ਤੁਮਰੇ ਜਨ ਤੁਮ ਹੀ ਤੇ ਜਾਨੇ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਜਾਨਿਓ ਜਨ ਤੇ ਮੁਖਫਾ ॥
ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਆਪਿ ਧਾਰਿਓ ਹਰਿ ਜਨ ਮਹਿ, ਜਨ ਨਾਨਕ ਹਰਿ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਇਕਫਾ ॥

Your humble servants are known only through You, God; knowing You, they becomes supreme. The Lord, Har, Har, has enshrined Himself within His humble servant. O Nanak, the Lord God and His servant are one and the same (Waheguru and Guru Nanak are one, and the same).

(SGGS, M.4, P. 1339)

- ਗੁਰੁ ਮੇਰੀ ਪੂਜਾ ਗੁਰੁ ਗੋਬਿੰਦੁ ॥ ਗੁਰੁ ਮੇਰਾ ਪਾਰਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਗੁਰੁ ਭਗਵੰਤੁ ॥ ---
ਗੁਰ ਕਾ ਸਬਦੁ ਨ ਮੇਟੈ ਕੋਇ ॥ ਗੁਰੁ ਨਾਨਕੁ, ਨਾਨਕੁ ਹਰਿ ਸੋਇ ॥

*I worship and adore my Guru; the Guru is the Lord of the Universe. My Guru is the Supreme Lord God; the Guru is the Lord God.....
No one can erase the Word of the Guru's Shabad. Nanak is the Guru; Nanak is the Lord Himself. || 4 || 7 || 9 ||*

(SGGS, M. 5, P.864)

- ਬਲਿਓ ਚਰਾਗੁ ਅੰਧਾਰ ਮਹਿ ਸਭ ਕਲਿ ਉਧਰੀ ਇਕ ਨਾਮ ਧਰਮ ॥
ਪ੍ਰਗਟੁ ਸਗਲ ਹਰਿ ਭਵਨ ਮਹਿ ਜਨੁ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਗੁਰੁ ਪਾਰਬ੍ਰਹਮ ॥

The lamp is lit in the darkness; all are saved in this Dark Age of Kali Yuga, through the One Name and faith in the Dharma. The Lord is revealed in all the worlds. O servant Nanak, the Guru is the Supreme Lord God. || 9 ||

(SGGS, M.5, P.1387)

The Bhagats have mentioned the importance of Guru or Satguru to some degree in their Banis, but have not clarified the relationship of the Guru with God. Sikhism puts much emphasis on the importance of Guru or Satguru as being a manifestation of Waheguru (God) without which one cannot connect with God. Pay attention to the following holy Shabads:

- ਬਿਨੁ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਕਿਨੈ ਨ ਪਾਇਓ ਬਿਨੁ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਕਿਨੈ ਨ ਪਾਇਆ ॥
ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਵਿਚਿ ਆਪੁ (ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਨੇ) ਰਖਿਅਨੁ ਕਰਿ ਪਰਗਟੁ ਆਖਿ ਸੁਣਾਇਆ ॥ -----

Without the True Guru, no one has obtained the Lord; without the True Guru, no one has obtained the Lord. He has placed Himself within the True Guru; revealing Himself, He declares this openly. Meeting the True Guru, eternal liberation is obtained; He has banished attachment from within.

(SGGS, M.1, P. 466)

- ਗੁਰ ਮਹਿ ਆਪੁ ਰਖਿਆ ਕਰਤਾਰੇ ॥ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਕੋਟਿ ਅਸੰਖ ਉਧਾਰੇ ॥
ਸਰਬ ਜੀਆ ਜਗਜੀਵਨੁ ਦਾਤਾ ਨਿਰਭਉ ਮੈਲੁ ਨ ਕਾਈ ਹੇ ॥ 15 ॥

The Creator Lord has enshrined Himself within the Guru. The Gurmukh saves countless millions. The Life of the World is the Great Giver of all beings. The Fearless Lord has no filth at all.

(SGGS, M.1, P. 1024)

- ਸਮੁੰਦੁ ਵਿਰੋਲਿ ਸਰੀਰੁ ਹਮ ਦੇਖਿਆ ਇਕ ਵਸਤ ਅਨੂਪ ਦਿਖਾਈ ॥
ਗੁਰ ਗੋਵਿੰਦੁ, ਗੋਵਿੰਦੁ ਗੁਰੂ ਹੈ, ਨਾਨਕ ਭੇਦ ਨ ਭਾਈ ॥

I have churned the ocean of the body, and I have seen the incomparable thing come into view. The Guru is God, and God is the Guru, O Nanak; there is no difference between the two, O Siblings of Destiny.

(SGGS, M.4. P. 442)

- ਗੁਰੁ ਪਰਮੇਸਰ ਏਕੋ ਜਾਣੁ ॥ ਜੋ ਤਿਸੁ ਭਾਵੈ ਸੋ ਪਰਵਾਣੁ ॥ ----
ਗੁਰ ਕੀ ਮਹਿਮਾ ਕਥਨ ਨ ਜਾਇ ॥ ਪਾਰਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਗੁਰੁ ਰਹਿਆ ਸਮਾਇ ॥ 4 ॥

Know that the Guru and the Transcendent Lord are One. Whatever pleases Him is acceptable and approved.....

The Guru's glory cannot be described. The Guru remains absorbed in the Supreme Lord God.

(SGGS, M. 5, P. 864)

- ਨਾਨਕ ਸੋਧੈ ਸਿੰਮ੍ਰਿਤਿ ਬੇਦ ॥ ਪਾਰਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਗੁਰ ਨਾਹੀ ਭੇਦੁ ॥

Nanak has studied the Simritees and the Vedas. There is no difference between the Supreme Lord God and the Guru.

(SGGS, M. 5, P.1142)

- ਸਗਲ ਸਿਆਨਪ ਛਾਡਿ ॥ -----
ਦੂਜਾ ਨਹੀ ਜਾਨੈ ਕੋਇ ॥ ਸਤਗੁਰੁ ਨਿਰੰਜਨੁ ਸੋਇ ॥

ਮਾਨੁਖ ਕਾ ਕਰਿ ਰੂਪੁ ਨ ਜਾਨੁ ॥ ਮਿਲੀ ਨਿਮਾਨੇ ਮਾਨੁ ॥

*Abandon all your clever tricks. Become His servant, and serve Him.
Let no one think that God and Guru are separate. The True Guru is the
Immaculate Lord. Do not believe that He is a mere human being; He gives
honor to the dishonored.* (SGGS, M. 5, P. 895)

As is clear from the above holy Shabads, Satguru (or Guru) is a manifestation of Waheguru, and disseminates His Divine Message to the world to enlighten it. That is exactly what Guru Nanak Sahib did when He travelled on foot to many countries to deliver the Divine Message. He undertook four major odysseys over a period of 22 years covering about 40000 km, and visiting about 15 countries. He travelled through thick forests, huge deserts, snow-covered mountains, and endured many foodless and sleepless days and nights, and faced death very frequently. No other religious leader travelled like Him under such hostile conditions.

2. Passing on Guruship and Compilation of Guru Granth Sahib and Sacrifices

Before Guru Nanak Sahib left this mortal world in 1539, He thought that His task of enlightening the world was nowhere close to completion, so He decided to pass on the Guruship to some fully deserving person to carry out His Mission. By this time, Guru Nanak Sahib had become a world-wide respected person, and had hundreds of thousands of disciples. He had two sons, but rather than appointing any of them as His successor, He passed on the Guruship to Bhai Lehna Ji (Guru Angad Dev Ji) who was not related to Guru Nanak Sahib in any worldly fashion, but who had attained the highest spiritual level in Guru Sahib's shelter. This practice continued for until the physical death of Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the Tenth Guru, in 1708.

As mentioned earlier, during His travels, Guru Nanak Sahib had collected some compositions of the renowned holy saints from different faiths, and from all walks of life, as long as those compositions matched with His own philosophy. Guru Nanak Sahib passed on those compositions to Guru Angad Dev ji, which successively reached Guru Arjun Sahib, the Fifth Guru. Guru Arjun Sahib enshrined the compositions of the first four Guru Sahiban, His own, and those of the other 29 great

souls including the 15 Bhagats, to compile the holy Scripture of the Sikhs – Sri Guru Granth Sahib. *This is only holy Book, which in addition to the six Sikh Gurus, includes the compositions of other holy saints of different faiths (including Islam) and of different social classes including the members of the lowest class on the Indian system of castes!!!!*

As is clear from the following holy Shabads, Guru Nanak saw a great deal of injustice in society, the oppression of the weak, the high-handedness of the government officials, wide-spread bribery among them, and the mistreatment of the lower classes:

- ਖੁਰਾਸਾਨ ਖਸਮਾਨਾ ਕੀਆ ਹਿੰਦੁਸਤਾਨੁ ਡਰਾਇਆ ॥ ਆਪੈ ਦੋਸੁ ਨ ਦੇਈ ਕਰਤਾ
ਜਮੁ ਕਰਿ ਮੁਗਲੁ ਚੜਾਇਆ ॥ ਏਤੀ ਮਾਰ ਪਈ ਕਰਲਾਣੈ ਤੈ ਕੀ ਦਰਦ ਨ ਆਇਆ ॥ 1 ॥
ਕਰਤਾ ਤੂ ਸਭਨਾ ਕਾ ਸੋਈ ॥ ਜੇ ਸਕਤਾ ਸਕਤੇ ਕਉ ਮਾਰੇ ਤਾ ਮਨਿ ਰੋਸੁ ਨ ਹੋਈ ॥ 1 ॥

Having attacked Khuraasaan, Baabar terrified Hindustan. The Creator Himself does not take the blame, but has sent the Mugal as the messenger of death. There was so much slaughter that the people screamed. Didn't You feel compassion, Lord? || 1 || O Creator Lord, You are the Master of all. If some powerful man strikes out against another man, then no one feels any grief in their mind.
(SGGS. M.1, P. 360)

- ਹਕੁ ਪਰਾਇਆ ਨਾਨਕਾ ਉਸੁ ਸੂਅਰ ਉਸੁ ਗਾਇ ॥ ਗੁਰੁ ਪੀਰੁ ਹਾਮਾ ਤਾ ਭਰੇ ਜਾ ਮੁਰਦਾਰੁ ਨ ਖਾਇ ॥
ਗਲੀ ਭਿਸਤਿ ਨ ਜਾਈਐ ਛੁਟੈ ਸਚੁ ਕਮਾਇ ॥ ਮਾਰਣ ਪਾਹਿ ਹਰਾਮ ਮਹਿ ਹੋਇ ਹਲਾਲੁ ਨ ਜਾਇ ॥
ਨਾਨਕ ਗਲੀ ਕੂੜੀਈ ਕੂੜੇ ਪਲੈ ਪਾਇ ॥੨॥

To take what rightfully belongs to another, is like a Muslim eating pork, or a Hindu eating beef. Our Guru, our Spiritual Guide, stands by us, if we do not eat those carcasses. By mere talk, people do not earn passage to Heaven. Salvation comes only from the practice of Truth. By adding spices to forbidden foods, they are not made acceptable. O Nanak, from false talk, only falsehood is obtained.
(SGGS, M. 1, P. 141)

- ਰਾਜੇ ਸੀਹ ਮੁਕਦਮ ਕੁਤੇ ॥ ਜਾਇ ਜਗਾਇਨਿ ਬੈਠੇ ਸੁਤੇ ॥
ਚਾਕਰ ਨਹਦਾ ਪਾਇਨਿ ਘਾਉ ॥ ਰਤੁ ਪਿਤੁ ਕੁਤਿਹੋ ਚਟਿ ਜਾਹੁ ॥
ਜਿਥੈ ਜੀਆ ਹੋਸੀ ਸਾਰ ॥ ਨਕੀ ਵਡੀ ਲਾਇਤਬਾਰ ॥੨॥

The kings are tigers, and their officials are dogs; they go out and awaken the sleeping people to harass them. The public servants inflict wounds with their nails. The dogs lick up the blood that is spilled. But there, in the Court of the Lord, all beings will be judged. Those who have violated the people's trust will be disgraced; their noses will be cut off.
(SGGS, M. 1, P.1288)

Guru Nanak Sahib did not tolerate this kind of injustice and oppression of the weak by the powerful, or by the people in high positions. He wanted to infuse the spirit in the society to fight against such evils. The following Shabad clearly attests to the philosophy of Guru Nanak Sahib:

- ਜਉ ਤਉ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਖੇਲਣ ਕਾ ਚਾਉ ॥ ਸਿਰੁ ਧਰਿ ਤਲੀ ਗਲੀ ਮੇਰੀ ਆਉ ॥
ਇਤੁ ਮਾਰਗਿ ਪੈਰੁ ਧਰੀਜੈ ॥ ਸਿਰੁ ਦੀਜੈ ਕਾਣਿ ਨ ਕੀਜੈ ॥
- *If you desire to play this game of love with Me, then step onto My Path with your head in hand. When you place your feet on this Path, give Me your head, and do not pay any attention to public opinion. (SGGS, M.1, P.1412)*

To infuse such spirit, examples of personal hardships, service to humanity, and sacrifices were needed, which the Gurus and many Sikhs made gladly. Guru Arjun Dev Ji was the first Sikh Guru to serve humanity during epidemics, endure extreme bodily hardships, and to sacrifice His life to defend the freedom of masses to practice their own faith. When the districts of Amritsar and Lahore suffered a wide-spread attack of small pox in 1596-97, Guru Arjun Sahib reached the small-pox plagued area, and served the people, His own infant son, Sri Hargobind Ji, became a victim of the deadly disease. In 1606 Guru Arjun Dev Ji was tortured to death in very inhumane ways while fighting for freedom of the people to practice their own faith. Guru Hargobind Sahib, had to raise an army to defend the freedom of the people to live with dignity. He had to fight four major battles when He was attacked by the Mughal armies, and He won all the four battles. Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib, also sacrificed His life (will be discussed separately), and Guru Gobind Singh Ji sacrificed all His four sons for the cause of Sikhism.

These sacrifices did not go unrewarded. With a Sikh population of less than 3% in Punjab at the time, Maharaja Ranjit Singh established a huge Sikh empire in 1799. The Sikhs earned a great reputation as great warriors in WW1 and WW2; and today they have settled all over the globe, and have maintained their distinct identity, and are respected for their contribution and their service to mankind.

3. Fight against Caste-System and Common Kitchen

Even though, the Bhagats resented the treatment meted out to the lower castes by the upper castes of the society, they did not take any steps, or preached against the abolition of the Caste-System. On the other hand; not only Guru Nanak Sahib disapproved the caste-system strongly, He forced His Sikhs to make no distinction between human beings based on caste-system. His close childhood friend was a very low-caste Muslim bard - Bhai Mardana Ji. Before leaving for His odysseys; Guru Nanak Sahib stayed with a low-caste carpenter, Bhai Lallo, for a few days while declining the invitation of a Khatri, Malik Bhago, who was a high official with the Nawab of Eminabad. One of the major oppositions to Sikhism levied by the Hindus, was the non-recognition of caste-system by the Sikh Gurus, which was so deeply entrenched in the society. *After Guru Nanak Sahib had completed His odysseys, and had settled at Kartarpur (District Gurdaspur) in around 1524, He established a common kitchen for all His visiting Sikhs of all castes giving the caste-system its last blow.*

Four of the five beloved-ones of Guru Gobind Singh Ji, who were the first to be administered Amrit, were low-caste Sikhs. It is highly unfortunate, that caste-system is again taking roots in Sikhism.

4. Fighting for the Rights of Others

People do give personal sacrifices while fighting for their rights; but it is rare that someone has given sacrifice for the rights of others. But Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib, the Ninth Sikh Guru did just that. During his reign as the emperor of India, Aurangzeb, forced millions of Hindus to embrace Islam. Those, who did not want to convert, were tortured, and put to death. Kashmir was the centre of educated Brahmans at the time. When Aurangzeb launched his conversion movement in Kashmir, a group of Kashmiri Brahmans came to Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib to protect them from the wrath of Aurangzeb. Even though, Guru Sahib strongly disapproved the Hindu practices of worship, and of differential treatment of the low-castes and of women, He agreed to help them. Guru Sahib knew very well that Aurangzeb would not be convinced to stop his atrocities, and He would have to lay down His life to defend the freedom of the

masses to practice their faith, Guru Sahib went to Delhi to meet with Aurangzeb. However, as expected, Aurangzeb did not change His mind, and Guru Sahib had to accept His sacrifice. He was beheaded in Nov. 1675. *There is no example of such supreme sacrifice in the history of the world.*

This is how Sikhism is also different from Bhagati Movement, and is a unique religion.